

## JOINT CAPITAL PLANNING COMMITTEE

Fiscal Year 2007

Section 5.2 of the Amherst Town Government Act states that “the Town Manager, with the advice of a joint capital planning committee comprised of representatives from the Select Board, finance committee, school committee and library trustees, shall develop a capital improvement program to be presented to the select board, finance committee, school committee and library trustees in time to be included in the finance committee report to the next annual town meeting.” The Joint Capital Planning Committee (JCPC) has two members each from the Select Board, School Committee, Library Trustees and Finance Committee. The JCPC’s focus during FY 08 was to update the Town’s five-year capital plan for the period FY 09 – 13 and develop specific recommendations for FY 09 for consideration at the 2008 Annual Town Meeting. The group met almost weekly over the winter and spring to evaluate and prioritize requests from the Town, schools and libraries for major capital expenditures that have an estimated useful life of at least five years and cost at least \$5,000.

Funds for the recommended Five Year Capital Plan come from the following sources: property taxes, enterprise and other special purpose funds of the Town, grant funds from the federal and state governments, and from unexpended balances from previously authorized capital projects. The plan assumes commitment of 7.25% of the local property tax levy in FY 09. Earlier capital plans used as much as 10% of the tax levy, which along with the other resources was enough, or almost enough, to keep up with renovation and maintenance of existing buildings, and also equipment replacement, but not enough to cover significant new projects. Beginning in FY 05, that percentage was reduced annually and dropped to a low of 7% for FY 08, after the defeat of the Proposition 2½ override in 2007. JCPC recommended that funding for capital should increase to 7.25% of the local property tax levy in FY 09, and incrementally in succeeding years to 9.5% in FY 13.

Despite the slight increase in the percentage of tax levy used in FY 09 compared to FY 08, proposals for capital plan funding exceeded available revenues by more than \$1.3 million. In order to construct a capital plan balanced with projected revenues, some capital recommendations were reduced in amount, many were deferred to later years, and many were eliminated altogether and placed onto an “unfunded” list for reconsideration in future years.

JCPC recommended and Town Meeting approved expenditure of \$610,000 of Chapter 90 money from the State for qualifying road projects (\$500,000) and a new backhoe/front end loader for the DPW (\$110,000).

Expenditures for capital equipment recommended by JCPC and approved by Town Meeting totaled \$1,861,400 and included: \$39,000 for photocopiers; \$123,000 for Town technology infrastructure equipment replacement (computers and network equipment); \$40,000 for the Town’s share of a Geographic Information System (GIS) base map update; \$130,000 for the replacement of four police cruisers; \$160,000 for replacement of the Fire Department’s oldest ambulance; \$25,000 for a replacement staff car for use by the Assistant Chief for Fire Prevention and EMS; \$635,000 for a “Quint” fire apparatus (combination pumper/ladder truck) to enhance the Fire Department’s fire suppression capacity and first-due response; \$67,400 for replacement of firefighter career force protective gear; \$115,000 to replace the DPW’s Bombardier Sidewalk Plow; \$60,500 for the Highway Division and \$60,000 for the Parks and Common Division to purchase two replacement one-ton dump trucks; \$22,000 for a new Cherry Hill Golf Course greens mower; \$20,000 for Jones Library technology infrastructure and \$5,000 for a library photocopier replacement; \$160,000 to replace two school buses; \$40,000 to replace a 1999 school handicapped van; \$4,000 for school telecommunications equipment; \$23,000 for school photocopiers; \$116,000 for school computer equipment; and \$16,500 for school multimedia audio/visual equipment.

JCPC recommended and Town Meeting approved a total of \$727,500 for building repairs and renovations. There were two projects totaling \$625,000 to be funded by borrowing; \$420,000 to repair and replace the roof and heating ventilation and cooling (HVAC) systems at the Bangs Community Center and \$205,000 borrowing authorization to purchase portable classroom units for Marks Meadow Elementary School. These funds supplement \$195,000 previously appropriated for this purpose in November 2007. Other building projects included: \$10,000 for ongoing facility improvements/repairs at the DPW Garage; \$50,000 to study the existing DPW facility to identify shortcomings in the facility with regards to current State and Federal health, safety and occupational standards; \$14,000 to Jones Library for slate roof and gutter repairs; \$3,500 for exterior safety lighting at the South Amherst School; \$10,000 to replace old door locks at the South Amherst and East Street Schools as part of a district-wide school security program; \$10,000 for ongoing asbestos removal at all schools; and \$5,000 to repair HVAC system leaks at the Crocker Farm School.

A total of \$128,500 was funded for other facilities needs. The Solid Waste Fund budget included \$88,000 for a Comprehensive Site Assessment at the old landfill. Taxation-funded recommendations included: \$18,000 to begin a 10-year replacement schedule for streetlights; \$10,000 for a solar-powered pedestrian crossing signal near the entrance to Crocker Farm; and \$12,500 to begin a multi-year (and we hope a permanent) program to purchase and plant new street trees each year.

The Five Year Capital Plan identified several major projects on the horizon, including the potential for one or two new fire stations, major renovations at both Wildwood and Fort River Elementary Schools, and the Public Works garage, and possibly additional borrowing for roads and sidewalks to address a growing backlog. Many other projects large and small will compete for scarce resources. For example, the FY 09 – 13 Capital Plan recommended debt service funding for a new fire station (either a new or renovated headquarters or a new substation in South Amherst) in Year 5 (FY 13). This is only possible if the Town increases funding allocations to the capital budget over a period of years as recommended by the JCPC and the Finance Committee. An adequately funded capital plan should be a critical component of any long-term financial plan for the Town.

Our entire Five Year Capital Plan Report for FY 09 -13 can be found on the Town's website.

#### JOINT CAPITAL PLANNING COMMITTEE

Anne Awad, Select Board

Hwei-Ling Greeney, Select Board (thru 4/1/08)

Elaine Brighty, School Committee

Kathleen Anderson, School Committee

Kay Moran, Finance Committee

Doug Slaughter, Finance Committee

Patricia Holland, Jones Library Trustees

Molly Turner, Jones Library Trustees

Staff Liaison: John Musante, Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director